

L A U R A ;

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FALL OF INNOCENCE:

A P O E M.

VICE IS A MONSTER OF SO FRIGHTFUL MEIN,
AS TO BE HATED, NEEDS BUT TO BE SEEN.

POPE.

L O N D O N :

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A. A. U. R. A.

FAIR OF INNOCENCE

A. A. U. R. A.



PRINTED FOR

TO THE

P U B L I C.

THERE is not, perhaps, a more unnecessary or less useful task an Author can impose upon himself, than delivering his opinion upon the merits or demerits of his own performance. His acknowledgment of inability is often construed to a mean solicitation of praise, and a self-panegyrick; however delicately worded, it is always supposed to spring from vanity. I shall, therefore, in presenting to the world the following Poem, say nothing either on its merits or demerits, as I am confident, if it has beauties, they will not be overlooked; and I am equally sensible, no apology I can make, can diminish its blemishes.

It perhaps however will not be deemed improper to say a few words on my situation in life,---a situation so unfriendly to genius, that I flatter myself, when it is known, it will not only excite the candour of a generous Public, but soften even the keen resentment of critics.

Without education, and bred to a mechanical employment, laborious even to drudgery, I have within the space of two years, besides the following Poem, written two Tragedies, a Poem upon the late Siege of Gibraltar, and several small pieces on different subjects. I do not mean to be understood by mentioning this, that I imagine bulk of writings is a proof of genius; or that the number of
verses

verses constitutes a Poet. I only mention it as an apology for not having attained that perfection of writing, called purity of language.

There is nothing I regret more, nor any loss I so sensibly feel, as my inability to associate with those whose elevated taste and education have qualified them to polish and instruct me—For want of such assistance, I often wander from my way, and am lost in the labyrinth of ignorance and uncertainty.

Let it however be remembered, when the imperfections of the following Poem are considered, that it was written in hours torn from sleep, not in a retired writing chamber, with a mind free from care, but in broken and disturbed moments, with anxiety of mind, and a body worn out by the toilsome labours of the lengthened day.

I have only to add, that in this Poem, which is a warning to the unthinking fair, I have been particularly careful to admit no expressions that can be deemed inimical to decency, or such as can even raise a blush on the cheek of modest virtue. It has for its object—what I trust will be no trifling recommendation—the interest of Morality.

Duke-street,

Oct. 3, 1787.

J. B.

L A U R A.

L A U R A.

FREE from ambition, wrangling and strife,
Serenely happy on the calm of life,
Far from the vicious current's rapid course,
The midnight revels, and the keen remorse,
The broken body, and the rankling mind,
Where heavenly gifts are hellishly consign'd,
Good ARTHUR liv'd, with prayers and blessings crown'd
Profusely, from the village hamlets round :
Friend to mankind—all whom stern fate denied,
Were from this parent constantly supplied ;
In godlike goodness were his blessings plac'd,
While melting pity ev'ry action grac'd ;
And on his soul, as life declin'd to night,
Celestial beams increas'd to their height :—
Connubial bliss, (which is, alas ! but rare,
That good men meet with a rewarding fair,)
For twenty years, or more, his gliding life
Felt the caresses of a tender wife ;
One only daughter promis'd to assuage
The cares and sorrows of advancing age,

Indulg'd their hopes, and future fears allay,
 And with sweet gambols seem'd to haste the day.
 Unite in LAURA was her father's grace,
 With the allurements of her mother's face ;
 Her faithful father, with parental part,
 Implanted virtue in her tender heart,
 While from her mother's melting bosom kind,
 Example's sweets entic'd her nurtur'd mind ;
 Thus as her years, in childish pleasures stole,
 Vice by gradation was debarr'd her soul.

Ev'n as two stately oaks upon the plain,
 With season's rage, unshaken do remain,
 United firm, thus shield when solar wastes,
 And this the shock of angry Boreas' blasts,
 And both with noble, sympathetic glow,
 Protect the naked, weaker race below ;
 While from embracing branches' vernal green,
 Dew-drops of pity's ever falling seen.
 Thus as they stand, projecting to the sky,
 Yet born of earth, from her receive supply ;
 A goodly stem from their joint roots ascends,
 And spurning earth, its progress upwards bends ;
 The lofty parents see with joyful eyes,
 Their tender, blooming, hopeful issue rise,
 Shield with their firmer trunks its youthful age,
 From the consuming, bellowing tempest's rage ;

Support

Support its head when drooping to decay,
 And upward to the Heavens direct its way,
 Until alas ! an unrelenting foe
 Steals o'er the plain, and cowardly gives the blow :
 Unto one's root the keen-edg'd axe is plied,
 By nervous arm most vigorous supplied ;
 It reels, it shakes, the springs of nature pass,
 And leaning on its partner, feels the last ;
 Down to the earth its heavy head is borne,
 With blossoms from its drooping neighbour torn :
 Now left alone, no friendly shelter given,
 Expos'd to all the quarters of the Heaven,
 The good old trunk is tossed to and fro,
 Himself, nor can protect the shrub below,

So truly happy ARTHUR, child, and wife,
 Until grim death deprived her of life ;
 He droops at thoughts of the deserted place,
 And sees the mother in the daughter's face ;
 The remnant of his happiness below,
 Expos'd to all the vicious scenes of woe :---
 Unfriended, and despised by mankind ;
 Alike by fortune, which his melting mind
 Had lavishly bestow'd upon distress,
 Until his own requir'd the same redress.--

But hear ye fons of pity, hear a tale,
 And let example teach, when precepts fail;
 He, who in munificence spent his prime,
 Lies now exposed to the rigid clime;
 He, who with tears the needy did relieve,
 With tears, because he had no more to give,
 In hoary age, and anguish, begs his bread,
 Where his unbounded, former bounty fed;
 Spurn'd by the harden'd wretch's stern command,
 That felt the blessings of his tender hand.

The tender LAURA fees, and mourns in vain,
 Her venerable, noble parent's pain;
 Hangs o'er his grief, fees from his melting eyes,
 The starting tears of cruel anguish rise;
 Whole show'rs of sorrow on her bosom flows,
 Which heaves with pain, and no deception knows,
 Thus the poor sire beholds with double grief,
 Yet cannot to her mind apply relief;
 But straight, with trembling arms unto his breast,
 In agonizing transports her he prest.
 ' Alas ! my daughter, '—here the accent drown'd,
 And mutual tears flow'd lavishly around:
 ' Thou'rt rising in a base, degenerate age,
 ' Where peace and virtue's banish'd from the stage;
 ' Mankind is changed to the savage frame,
 ' Nothing is human, but the form and name :

' Near

' Near forty years have I with willing hands,
 ' Bestow'd my living, and mortgag'd my lands,
 ' To feed the needy ;---now, alas! 'tis past,
 ' And I in want conclude my race at last.
 ' Yet oh! my daughter, I cou'd die in peace,
 ' Did all my cares with this poor body cease ;
 ' But thou art left on this inclement shore,
 ' Where baseness reigns, and virtue is no more ;
 ' Expos'd alone, without a friend to give
 ' Thee one advice, directing how to live ;
 ' My God above must guide thy tender heart,
 ' Thy mother's gone; and I must soon depart :---
 ' Commit thy all to His unerring pow'r,
 ' He'll shield thy soul, when worldly tempests low'r.
 ' Alas! my child, my child, this vital breath,
 ' Is only given to prepare for death :
 ' If virtue's here to desperation drove,
 ' 'Tis sure presage of a reward above.
 ' Renounce all pleasures, where darts dipt in sin,
 ' And sent from hell, are surest lurk'd within ;
 ' No base, deceitful, flatt'ring man believe,
 ' Whose cursed art, and boast, is to deceive.
 ' Beware, I charge, thy dying parent's will,
 ' You carefully, and punctually fulfil.---
 ' Those last requests are all I have to leave,
 ' For worldly wealth I now have none to give.

^ Heavens

' Heavens save my child,---if ever I was dear,
 ' Or was design'd a blessing, pour it here.
 ' I ask no more,---but oh, let her be blest,
 ' If I for ever be for it accurst.'

He said,---the moments now approaching fast,
 And grasping still his daughter, breath'd his last.
 Thus fell the just, the generous and kind,
 The Maker's servant, and the creature's friend;
 He, whose whole life was spent without a blot,
 Dies unlamented, hidden and forgot.
 The drooping LAURA now no comfort knows,
 But finds mankind and fortune both her foes;
 The harden'd wretch, who feign'd himself a friend,
 And to her father greedily did lend,
 On usury, now grasps at double gain,
 In the sad moments of distress and pain;
 All is too small, the houses, goods, and lands,
 To satisfy his covetous demands.
 Drove from her youthful covert of relief,
 And in despair with agony and grief,
 The tender LAURA lamentable cries,
 With groans and tears, enough to rend the skies;
 Which way to steer the troubled course of life,
 Her heaving bosom long is at a strife;
 She sees time's foaming ocean float with cares,
 And beaten tracts of shame, remorse and snares,

While

While o'er her head the clouds of fortune low'r,
With gloomy aspect ready to devour.

As when the troubled ocean awful flies,
And rising billows brave the low'ring skies,
The thoughtful pilot ponders stupid by,
And from the danger knows no remedy ;
Far on the boundless ocean, from a haven,
Ungovernable by the tempest driven,
While heavy clouds conceal the face of day,
And hanging round the mast, impede her way ;
Mountaineous seas, like Atlas, dreadful rise,
And bear the bark sublimely to the skies ;
The mariners fast shrinking to the shrouds,
See far below the broken-tossed clouds ;
Down in the vast abyss she drops amain,
Until the rustling gravel her sustain.
Now on the bottom of the sea she rides,
While stones, like cannon balls, assail her sides :
Immense the gulph, far distant from the view,
The floating mountains wear a hoary hue ;
Ascending fast, the dashing billow sheds,
Whole sheets of water on their drooping heads ;
In desperation tossed to and fro,
The pilot stands, his mind congeal'd with woe,
Unable to direct, unknowing how to go.

}
So

So LAURA stood, confus'd with grief and fear,
 In life's sad storm, and ignorant to steer.
 At last,—for fate will ever bear the sway,
 To the metropolis she bent her way.

O city curst! wide as thy bound'ry lies,
 So wide the scenes of vice and folly rise:
 Thou fountain-head of sin, remorse and shame,
 And many evils which I cannot name;
 What unrelenting, fatal, dire decree
 Ordained innocence to come to thee!
 A den of wolves, who with destruction bold,
 Devour each sheep that strayeth from its fold;
 T' enumerate all the vicious feed that grows,
 With which thy nurtur'd bosom overflows;
 To tell what mischief ev'ry grain has wrought,
 And how each plant is to perfection brought,
 Ten thousand tongues, ten thousand books a day,
 Allotted each in folio to say;
 Ten thousand ages constantly to bawl,
 Ten thousand times redoubled, is too small;
 Let it suffice, that nothing will go down,
 'Till smut and satire ev'ry tittle crown:—
 Here rising merit's stifled in the birth,
 Profound's sublime, and impudence is worth.

But

But Oh, my muse, say shall I e'er attain
 That bliss, for which the longing sigh is vain,
 Far from the giddy croud to live at peace,
 Where truth's rever'd, and oppressions cease,
 On nature's tranquil breast to lean my mind,
 And leave the painful toils of art behind;
 There with my friend to improve by follies past,
 And there resign'd, serenely breathe my last.

But to resume—high-mounted on the stage,
 That brings fond youth to town, and takes repenting age
 Back to their native air, from whence they came,
 To soothe their guilty souls, and heal their odious frame,
 Sat the too-lovely, blushing innocence,
 Which was her only, but her worst defence;
 Alighted at the inn—a goodly cit,
 With a round paunch, and elevated wit,
 Attracted by her lonely weeds and face,
 Interrogated with uncommon grace,
 ‘My pretty lass, if you are come to town,
 ‘To see your friends, or buy a Sunday’s gown,
 ‘Let me but know where your acquaintance stay,
 ‘I gladly will conduct you on your way.’
 He paus’d;—the starting tear from LAURA’S eye,
 And swelling heart, impeded her reply.
 ‘I have no friend,’ she said, with drooping head,
 ‘But I’m come here to labour for my bread.’

The tender cit, uncreditable tale!
 That pity in such bosoms e'er prevail,
 Saw the effusion of unfeigned grief,
 And thus endeavour'd to apply relief.
 ' I'm happy then, I have it in my pow'r,
 ' To prove thy friend in this unhappy hour:
 ' I want a servant, come along with me,
 ' Thy wages shall as thy behaviour be;
 ' Two maids I keep, no easier place is found,
 ' Within the circle of the parish round;
 ' One staid seven years, and might been seven years more,
 ' Had not the wanton gipsy turn'd a whore;
 ' I fear not you, you have a modest face,---
 ' Come, come, it is a comfortable place;
 ' In faith I think 'tis very dang'rous now,
 ' To trust alone such charms as are in you.'
 He stopt—the blooming LADRA gave consent,
 Then straightway to his house she with him went,
 With hopes that frowning fate had run its course,
 And smiling fortune had begun its source;
 Here for six months her time she happy spent,
 She lived easy, and she liv'd content.

As in the morn of smiling summer gay,
 Sol's golden rays illuminate the day,
 And from his burnish'd throne where he doth rise,
 Infuses gladness to the distant skies,

Annon, the dark'ning clouds imprest with rain,
 Sink deep in air, and hide th' adjacent plain,
 While breath of elements advancing strong,
 Impels them floating, furiously along;
 Now nearer borne, with their increasing weight,
 The horizon's conceal'd in fable night;
 Their flight wove texture can no more contain,
 But down in torenadoes pours the rain,
 While bellowing tempests spread destruction round,
 And congeal'd water bounding from the ground,
 'Till vapours spent, the lighten'd clouds retire
 Unto their native textur'd source of air;
 The sky appears, and the departing sun
 Shines forth an hour t' convince us he has run
 His day of life,---then with transcendence bright,
 Sinks down below, and hurries on the night.

Here LAURA stood; life's smiling summer's morn,
 Already past, the mid-day tempest born;
 Now at the close of eve enjoys a light,
 To white the horrors of an awful night.
 Long had she mourn'd, and shed the artless tears,
 And long to consolation shut her ears;
 Lamenting still the hard decree of fate,
 Her tender parents, and her orphan'd state;
 'Till time, who mocks the nature of mankind,
 And unto sorrow is a certain friend,

Had by gradation sooth'd the tender part,
 And wafted sorrow from her feeling heart.
 No more the virgin sheds the April tears,
 But with the sweets of blooming May appears ;
 Fair as the lily, blushing as the rose,
 While sprightly eyes each glance the heart disclose ;
 O'erflowing with pity, tenderness and love,
 And all the melting graces from above,
 Which nature first bestow'd on man below,
 To soothe his sorrows in this vale of woe.
 O! had she here with unpolluted breast,
 Unstain'd with sin, and guiltless breath'd her last,
 She would've been happy, and my trembling quill
 Relieved from a melancholy tale ;
 But as her fate to desperation run,
 I'm bound to finish what I have begun.

'Close by the Fleet, where many horrors lay,
 As LAURA pass'd on an unhappy day,
 An aged dame, with artful smiling face,
 Enquir'd her name, her country, and her place ;
 The simple LAURA, innocent replied,
 And no interrogation once denied.
 'I mean you well,' said the deceitful dame,
 'I well remember thy good father's name ;
 'You have his features marked in thy face,
 'For I myself come from that very place :

' 'Tis twenty years ago,—how time does pass!
 ' Since I in that delightful country was;
 ' I long to see it still, but I'm a wife,
 ' And fate, I think, has fixt me here for life.
 ' But come, my dear, do, just a moment come,
 ' And see what happiness I have at home;
 ' I'm very glad indeed, I chanc'd to meet
 ' You in this place,—'tis only the next street,
 ' Come, come, a moment home, and ease thy feet.'
 ' At present,' LAURA said, ' I plead excuse,
 ' My mistress for my stay, will me abuse.'
 ' Your mistress,' said the subtle, hellish fiend,
 ' Is my relation, and partic'lar friend;
 ' Tell her 'twas I that urg'd thee to delay,
 ' And at my house compelled thee to stay.'
 Thus LAURA heard, and trusting gave consent,
 Then straightway homeward both together went.

As messengers of light, who sinning fell
 From heav'nly spheres, into the lowest hell,
 Into revengeful, hideous demons turn'd,
 And at each ray of peace with anger burn'd;
 Resolv'd with unrelenting, foaming rage,
 Perpetual, fiery warfare to engage
 Against the host of virtue's sacred shrine,
 The joy possessing, and the hope divine,
 Now

Now lost to them, 'tis all the bliss they know,
 To lure the innocent to endless woe;
 Who, oft secure, see no destruction near,
 And go direct to hell, without a fear.

So LAURA went, unthoughtful, unconcern'd,
 To meet her horrid, and her dreadful end;
 Lur'd by this artful fiend, she steers her course
 Forward, undaunted to the fatal house;
 The door secure, remained bolted fast,
 And screened lights a gloomy aspect cast;
 She knock'd, and in a gaudy light attire,
 And countenance foreboding loose desire,
 A nymph, impatient looked from within,
 And in a moment turn'd her head again.

' This is my daughter, said the arch deceit,
 ' What pleasures do attend a married state !'

The door unlock'd, they passed quickly in
 To the dire shelter of polluted sin;
 Thence to a room, adorned with a bed,
 Was the devoted, fatal victim led;
 As yet contented, trustful and secure,
 With easy bosom, and intentions pure,
 'Till wishing to depart, impatient grown,
 Her fawning friend assumes a sterner frown.

' You

' You shall not to your place return to-day,
 ' 'Tis my desire, and pleasure, you here stay;
 ' Your mistress will not, dare not thee abuse,
 ' Myself shall with thee go, and plead excuse.'
 This bold determination and reply,
 Impell'd the starting tear in LAURA's eye;
 Suspicious turn'd, she rose with beating heart,
 In firmest resolution to depart:
 Too late, alas! the vile procuress came,
 Bawl'd out for aid, and push'd her down again.
 Now in the chamber, eager to destroy,
 Rush'd in a moment with applauding joy;
 A group of shameless, unrelenting foes,
 Who mock'd her sorrows, and despis'd her woes;
 Now fully wak'd, the wretched LAURA cries
 Aloud for aid, and to escape them tries;
 But all in vain,—one choaks the piteous sound,
 Some press her down, while others bawl around;
 She struggles long her virtue to retain,
 And long breathes out the tender sound in vain,
 'Till nature sinks, and can no more endure,
 Then down she tumbles breathless on the floor;
 The harden'd wretches, in the hellish trade,
 Expose her shame, and lay her on the bed,—
 Came at this time, with knock redoubled thrice,
 Inur'd to sin, to cruelty and vice,

Glitt'ring

Glitt'ring in titles, pomp and pageantry,
 (Perhaps, caress'd by a blind country,) This may be true
 A wretch, a savage, an ill-omen'd frame,
 Disgrace to human nature, and the name,
 Society's pest, and who in fins excel,
 The curse of mortals, and the friend of hell;
 To peace of mind who cannot have pretence,
 Though fortune made him Earl, Duke, or Prince.
 The cringing dame, with joy enlighten'd face,
 Extols his prey, and leads him to the place
 Commanded hence, with swimming, giddy head;
 He mounts with hellish joy the cursed bed;
 Straight down by the unhappy fair does lye,
 With arms entwin'd, secures his destin'd prey,
 And waits impatient her returning day.

As the enraged Lion, when he bounds,
 By hunger urg'd, on unsuspected grounds,
 Ranges around for prey, with all his might,
 In awful silence with the veil of night,
 Till by instinct, his fiery eyeballs see,
 Half shadow'd by a false, untrustful tree,
 Securely fast, in silent happiness,
 And dreams, perhaps, of former sportive bliss,
 A tender lamb, that in the eve had come
 Unthoughtful, far from her protecting home;

Bewilder'd.

Bewilder'd in the forest, by the night,
 Now unsuspecting, waits the morning light.
 Ill-fated innocence, thy dreadful foe
 Hangs o'er thy waking, with tremendous brow ;
 Couches, impatient, on the verdant green,
 While thy devoted carcase is between
 His horrible, expanded, mighty paws,
 And o'er thy head extended are his jaws.
 It wakes, it shrinks, and only lifts its eyes,
 To view its horrors, e'er it's torn, and dies.

So LAURA lay, devoted, free from pain ;
 So innocence awoke, for to be slain.
 She wakes, she starts, and sees with racking mind,
 Her ruin certain, and her fate assign'd ;
 Up rears her head, admits one thought, and then
 Falls speechless to the fatal bed again.
 The brutal monster, eager to devour,
 Compleats her ruin, and her woes ensure ;
 All night in weeping, groaning and despair,
 Spent the unhappy, miserable fair ;
 While the dire wretch, until the morning light,
 Deaf to her wrongs, enjoys his curst delight ;
 Now fatiated,—with the rising sun,
 He takes his leave, and homeward does return ;
 All morn he sleeps ; within Saint Stephen's walls,
 At Eve, the patriot for justice bawls.

These, Albion, are thy guardians, those the chiefs,
 Selected, chosen, to relieve thy griefs ;
 These give the law, with venerable stile,
 Protectors and defenders of thy isle.
 Unhappy isle ! a land where liberty,
 Is far too dearly purchas'd to be free ;
 This, at the price of innocence is sold,
 With thy hard-earned, and extorted gold :
 Then where redress, when pangs and want succeed,
 And minds corrupted, to destruction lead ;
 Where aged parents, with their children bend,
 To an untimely, miserable end ?
 Not here : reflection, reason, says it must
 Be where the law is merciful and just ;
 Where partiality no footing knows,
 The murd'ring culprit justice undergoes :
 Or heav'nly order is, of no esteem,
 Conscience is nought, and virtue but a dream.
 But while I thus with my sensation sway,
 I lose my course, and wander from my way.

The miserable victim, now alone,
 Knowing that her honour is for ever gone,
 Bedews with tears the bed of lust and shame,
 And sighing ev'ry breath, her Maker's name,
 In

In agony of mind, and inward strife;
 She moans, and gropeth for a friendly knife,
 Resolv'd to end her sorrows with her life. }
 'Till with her rustling noise, the wrinkled dame,
 Unto her aid, in haste, suspicious came;
 Wrench'd from her hands the instrument of fate,
 And thus prolong'd her miserable state.
 When three long weeks she thus had wretched been,
 In close confinement, and no views had seen
 Of wished change, and each repeated sin
 Seem'd to turn lighter, and a smaller stain.

At last with loose discourse, and gold applied,
 Unto her fortune she turn'd satisfied;
 Now lost to ev'ry virtue, lost to shame,
 Pleas'd with the sin, abhorring but the name,
 Once lovely LAURA, smiling on the streets,
 Becomes the sport of ev'ry fool she meets.

As on the funny ascent of a hill,
 Where blooming gardens open to the vale,
 Is plac'd a swelling lake, that soft does flow,
 In small meanders, to the plain below,
 That cools each scorched shrub and lilly fair,
 And kindly aids the toiling gard'ner's care,
 Until a midnight, depredating foe,
 Steals in the dark, and opes the source of woe,

One side destroys of the sustaining mould,
 Then homeward flies, with swiftneſs uncontroll'd ;
 The barrier broke, the lake no bounds contain,
 But pours in haſty torrents to the plain :
 Flow'rs, ſhrubs, and trees, are from their nurture torn,
 And on the rapid current ſwiftly borne,
 Headlong, unbounded to the open vale,
 Which marrs its courſe, and the whole maſs repel.

So LAURA, now the maiden barrier gone,
 Deſcending vice flies rapidly along,
 Into the vale of ſhame, and ſin below,
 Broad prostitution, and continual woe,
 While with the ſtream, each virtuous blooming flow'r
 Is tore, and loſt in the deſtructive hour,
 Deceiv'd herſelf, deſpairing to regain
 Her wonted bliſs, but doomed to remain
 The ſlave of brutal paſſions, and the ſcorn
 Of haughty fools, too racking to be borne.---
 Once tender LAURA, now a woeful change,
 Breathes only by the pleaſures of revenge,
 Upon the credulous, and harmleſs mind,
 And hates alike exiſtence and mankind ;
 Each variegated ſcene of vice ſhe knows,
 And from her ev'ry ſpark of virtue throws ;
 Until remorse, the laſt who vice controul,
 And rouses late repentance in the ſoul,

Was

Was humbled beneath the ponderous weight
 Of those indulged revels of the night.
 Now in despite of all religious ties,
 Disdaining heav'n and earth, she dreadful lies,
 Wallowing in filth, enticing to devour,
 Blaspheming God and his almighty pow'r;
 And onward goes, still sinning, unconcern'd
 Of pre-existence, or an awful end,
 Until her long, unbounded course of shame
 Impair'd her health, and chang'd her sinful frame.
 Her beauty fades, and her decaying eyes
 No longer captivate the simple prize.
 Disease, the curse of infamy, succeeds,
 And with fell pangs, unto destruction leads.
 The hellish fiend now sees her best is o'er,
 And that her service cannot profit more,
 With countenance insulting over woe,
 Commands her from her house direct to go;
 And that her punishment may be complete,
 Commands her pimp to kick her to the street.

That such infernal rendezvous of hell,
 Who against law and gospel doth rebel,
 Existeth, sad experience can tell.
 Shame to the laws, or more the magistrates,
 That yawn securely on their gilded seats,
 And leave th' unwary to their helpless fates.

What

What plea, ye pamper'd race, can ye pretend,
 Or with what words your indolence defend?
 The law of Heav'n, if not of men, commands
 Impartial justice from your pow'rful hands.—
 'Tis truly lamentable I must own,
 The human heart is so degen'rate grown,
 As to require severer laws to bind,
 Than nature first implanted in the mind,
 But as it is, Society's good demands,
 Nay more, the God of Nature thee commands
 T' assist the needy, succour the distressed,
 And nurture virtue in th' aspiring breast;
 Root out oppressors, treachery, and send
 Society's curse to their deserving end.
 Go, slothful men, turn Pekin's history o'er,
 Review her laws, her policy and pow'r:
 See fearful guilt abash'd at innocence;
 Take your example there, and copy thence.—

But to return:—December's chilling blast,
 Had o'er the earth his hoary mantle cast:—
 'Twas night,—the furly, wrinkled, latching men,
 Were bellowing round in haste, the hour of ten;
 Now in the street, unfriended,—rack'd with pain,
 Unshelter'd from the nipping congeal'd rain,
 Went LAURA stupid, onward in surprise,
 With groaning heart, down face, and wat'ry eyes.

Now

Now conscience like a lively spark of fire,
 Conceal'd with wanton thoughts, and loose desire,
 Burn'd with redoubl'd violence out anew,
 And open'd all her sins unto her view;
 Her dying father's last expressions kind
 Sprang in like darts, upon her rankling mind;
 She sees his virtues in their brightest dye,
 And how each vice he nobly did defy;
 Reflects on her pollution, sin, and shame,
 And deprecates her base, degen'rate frame;
 Her swoln heart with racking anguish burns,
 Now stupefaction seize her soul by turns;
 Long stands she here, the beating shocks of grief,
 In grim despair, and no hopes of relief;
 No shelter from the unrelenting rain,
 Nor no relief from her encreasing pain;
 Weary of life, no future comfort given,
 From men below, or pity from the heaven.
 At last resolving with a heavy groan,
 In death to end her sorrows and her moan,
 Toward the Thames she rusheth swiftly on.—

As in a tempest, when the distant shore,
 From shoals and cliffs, the raging billows roar;
 Drove by the winds and tide, the bark on high,
 Leaps off the waves, suspended in the sky;
 Long

Long tofs'd, beaten, with the angry blast,
 And ev'ry moment fearing to be cast
 Upon some rock, and into pieces dash'd,
 Stood the desponding pilot, when the light,
 Though small, withdrew at the approaching night;
 Now darkness veils the heav'ns, the raging main,
 A spectacle of horror does remain;
 The dreadful tempest rages more and more,
 While o'er their heads Jove's bolts sublimely roar;
 Now darting lightnings point the awful way,
 Above the tossed fish, and water fry;
 Increasing more, the conflagration flies,
 'Till elements in flames assail the skies;
 The mast erect darts thro' the angry clouds,
 Anon the forked lightning strikes the shrouds,
 Down on the deck, in shivers swiftly fall,
 While the desponding tars for mercy call;
 Like show'rs of darts, the rigging instant bound,
 Immers'd in flames, which pour destruction round;
 No hope is left, at life's expence, the light
 Shows all the horrors of this woeful night:
 Now all in flames the fatal bark appears,
 And awful Death his grimmest aspect wears;
 The frantic mariners fly to and fro,
 In desperation, reeling as they go;
 Spin out their latest hope with fond desire,
 Half drown'd with water, and half burnt with fire.

At

At last, unable longer to sustain
 The scorching heat, they spring into the main;
 There, free from agony, to yield their breath,
 And instant die, to shun a ling'ring death.

So LAURA flew from her despairing state,
 To meet a certain and an instant fate :
 The swollen Thames, gorg'd with th' expanding tide,
 Had sent his waters foaming to the side,
 While with the angry winds, that loud did roar,
 His ruff'd billows beat upon the shore :
 In silent sorrow, with a heart like stone,
 Came LAURA, stupid, pondering along,
 With mind congeal'd with grief, upon the sands,
 A while in horror, motionless she stands :
 Now looks around, least some officious friend
 Shou'd her unbounded misery expand ;
 Thinks on her fatal end, with awful dread,
 Until her hair's erect upon her head ;
 Now heaving like the vapour tossed ball,
 Convulsions seize her frame, which down doth fall,
 Breathless, upon th' inhospitable shore,
 Where she remains, 'till louder tempests roar.
 The winter, bellowing keener from the sky,
 And swollen tide, the place of art supply ;
 The chilling air benumbs her hands and feet,
 While rising waters on her temples beat.

Now rous'd, surpris'd, she sees her wishes brought,
 Yet trembling flies the very death she sought;
 But hardly had she enter'd on the street,
 Ere rigid fate directed her to meet
 A guardian of night, who with a voice,
 Resembling a lowing heifer's noise,
 Sternly demanded what her business was,
 And how she came at that time there to pass?
 Stupid with grief she would have pass'd by,
 And only by her silence made reply,
 Had not the midnight cur, with harden'd hand,
 Seiz'd on her arm, and forced her to stand.
 ' You shall to Bridewell go,—it is not meet,
 ' That wh—es be suffer'd thus to walk the street :'
 He said—in vain she formed a pretence,
 And of her innocence gave the defence :
 One silver coin alone, the hire of sin,
 Within her vacant pockets did remain ;
 The last of worldly store, the price of shame,
 For which she sold her honour, peace and fame :
 Within his hooffy-hand she it applied,
 Which clear'd his brows, and lulled all his pride,
 ' Go home, my dear,' with smiling face he said,
 ' 'Tis highly time that you shou'd be in bed ;'
 Then round he turn'd, forsook his ransom'd prey,
 And bellowing out the hour, march'd on his way.

Where

Where is pity now, to make her moan?
 To what sequester'd corner is she gone,
 Of this degenerate, and fallen world,
 While innocence is this to ruin hurl'd?
 Where is untainted justice to be found,
 From pole to pole, or in the tropics round?
 All, all is marr'd, Corruption's fatal gust
 Pierc'd through her soul and laid her in the dust;
 From the dissembling, pompous peer bright,
 Unto the yelping savage of the night,
 Self, self alone assumes th' imperial sway,
 Which ev'ry spark of virtue must obey.

For LAURA now, fresh smarting in her mind,
 With the insultings of debas'd mankind,
 Again resolv'd the thoughts of life to spurn,
 She straightway to the water did return,
 The weaning moon but faintly gleam'd a light,
 'Twixt flying clouds in this destructive night,
 Thrice four re-echo'd from Time's pressing hand,
 When LAURA enter'd back upon the strand;
 Now firmly bent to end her hopeless fate,
 With streaming eyes she thus bewail'd her state;
 "O wretched creature! born to endless woes,
 "Accurs'd by pow'rs above, and men below;
 "Why was I born, or why you awful Heaven,
 "Was I not to the grave in childhood given?

' Or when my tender father, drown'd in tears,
 ' And yielding life, bewail'd my helpless years,
 ' Didst thou not then, when linked to his breast,
 ' Contract my span, and call me to my last?---
 ' I might been happy; but alas! alas!
 ' Fate unrelenting suffer'd it to pass.---
 ' O horrid state!--to desperation drove,
 ' No shelter here, no comfort from above,
 ' Where shall I hide me?---whither shall I fly?
 ' Compell'd from life, and unprepar'd to die?---
 ' Sins great and deadly all my hopes controul,
 ' And, like thick clouds, benight my drooping soul.---
 ' Yet I must die!--O curfings on that day,
 ' And on that wretch that did me first betray!--
 ' O Heav'n! O Heav'n!--Here horror seiz'd her brain,
 And stupefaction did her sense retain.---

Thy pardon, tender reader---I must here
 Again digress, and wipe the falling tear;
 Unhappy fair, for thee the story fails,
 And thy unequal'd misery bewails;
 Thou Grecian bard, chief of Apollo's train,
 That breath'd immortal on the Trojans slain,
 Why have I not thy heart, or hadst not thou my pen?
 What is the brutal business of war,
 Where glowing ardour tenderness debar?

Or

Or the unbounded passions of a prince,
 Compar'd with murder'd, dying innocence ?
 Here is a soul in heinous sinful dye,
 Despairing, driven to eternity ;
 Suspended o'er the awful brink of death,
 By one short-liv'd and uncertain breath ;
 That breath once out, she instant plunges in
 Th' unknown gulph, o'er-burthened with her sin.

But to conclude—A seeming noise behind
 Awoke her senses, and recall'd her mind ;
 Around she look'd, and sigh'd her last adieu,
 Then in the chilling water straightway flew ;
 Breast high she stands, the ruff'd angry tide,
 Unfeeling as mankind, dash on her head ;
 She heaves, she pants, and once for mercy calls,
 Then downward to the bottom instant falls ;
 Pain and the motion force her up once more,
 To take her final leave of Nature's shore :
 She draws one breath, once opes her starting eyes,
 Sinks to the bottom, never to arise.

Thus fell a blooming, young, unhappy fair,
 The prey of cruelty, anguish and despair.
 She, who a bright propitious course begun,
 At dawn of life, and the ascending sun,

Long

Long ere high noon, by winds and billows tof'd,
 Is on the rocks of desperation loft;
 She, who in revelling and false delight,
 In open prostitution spent the night;
 Now on the clotted mud and slimy mire,
 With violent tides is tossed here and there;
 Even that same bosom long with pain oppress'd,
 Whereon gross senators have oft been blest,
 Have felt release from drudgery of state,
 The watchful care, and labour'd debate,
 Now lies disfigur'd o'er with wounds and gore,
 And is by hungry fishes rudely tore,
 While horned eels go to the inner part,
 And twisting round, like serpents, pierce her heart,
 There fatten on corrupted blood, that they
 May be again voracious mankind's prey.

Her noble part, blind bigotry away,
 One morning's dawn precedeth but one day.
 Let this small spark of reason we enjoy,
 No partial views, or prejudice destroy;
 Then what is life, or for what purpose giv'n,
 Or what path leads most direct to Heaven?
 The first's a breath, the second's long been shown,
 The last is known by all, and still remains unknown;
 Whose

' Whose life is in the right,' was nobly said,
 But where's compell'd curses to be laid ?
 The first, you'll say, on them that did the deed,
 But not the many evils that succeed :
 Then let me ask, if I with open force,
 Remove a bank, and marr a river's course,
 Whose waves at liberty, destructive flow,
 And fertile fields and gardens overthrow ;
 Whom then can candour rest the blame upon,
 Me, or the waters rushing swiftly on ?
 If souls are formed for a future state,
 Which none but guilty minds wish to dispute ;
 Which hope asserts, and inspiration seals,
 And the despised sacred page reveals ;
 Conscience and reason loudly do proclaim,
 That he who stabs and killeth is the same,
 If death succeeds, no matter soon or late,
 The culprit meets, or ought to meet his fate.

Here we behold an inoffensive mind,
 Rear'd up in virtue, and on peace reclin'd ;
 By generosity to ruin hurl'd,
 And sent an exile to a cursed world ;
 Unfriended, when the ties were wanted most,
 And drove to want, still striving to be just ;

With

With artless bosom, free from guilt or stain,
 Betray'd, unpitied, and compell'd to sin;
 Drove by Necessity's all ruling hand,
 Through seas of vice to Desperation's land,
 On whose grim shore, by cruel billows cast,
 She yields her breath,---and falleth at the last.

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F I N I S

